

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2003

The Honorable Tom Ridge
Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge,

We are writing to you about the funding levels for the high-threat, high-density urban areas program in the Homeland Security appropriations bill, as passed by the House on June 24, 2003.

We are very pleased to see in your recent public statements that you would like to see the Fiscal Year 2003 levels of funding for Homeland Security discretionary grants to high-threat, high-density urban areas maintained for Fiscal Year 2004. Your statement this week saying that you would "like to see the number significantly higher than \$500 million" was welcome in more than 40 cities which your Department has identified as being the most likely targets of a terrorist attack. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives failed to fulfill your request when it approved a Homeland Security appropriations bill which provided only \$500 million for these high threat areas - a \$300 million cut from FY04 levels. Consequently, we have some questions and concerns:

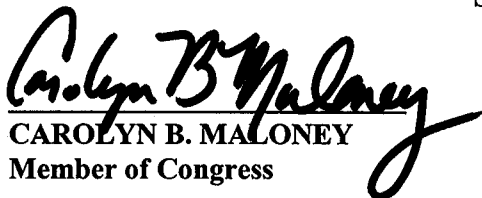
1. The Administration's FY04 budget requests a \$322 million increase in funding for the Office of Domestic Preparedness. However, the budget is silent on how much funding would be provided for various programs within ODP, in particular, the high threat, high density urban area program. Based on your recent statements, it is clear that you strongly support this program. Was it the Administration's intention that this \$322 million increase would be used to either maintain or increase funds for the high-threat program?
2. Since we agree on the need to increase funds for high-threat regions, will the administration send a request that the high-threat funding be increased to \$800 million as in FY03?
3. Does the administration plan to ask the House leadership to restore the funding for this critical program for areas under the greatest threat?
4. If you do intend to request additional funding for this program, from where do you propose to obtain the additional funds?
5. Since many of us believe that this bill is severely underfunded for our homeland needs, would you support increasing the overall funding in the appropriations bill?
6. We were appreciative of your statements that the current Homeland Security basic grants funding formula is inappropriate. In FY03, almost \$1.9 billion, or 70% of the funds for first responders, were distributed without consideration of factors such as population density, infrastructure, and intelligence that would indicate actual threats to specific cities. In the proposed FY04 budget that the House just passed, that proportion increases to nearly 83%. You articulated the need for this formula to change when you said "distributing those dollars according to the old formula, I don't believe means we get maximum security for the dollars that are expended at the national level." Given your recent statements on this issue and your previous testimony before the Senate when you stated that you thought the formula was "inappropriate," do you intend to make any formal suggestions to Congress about how the formula can be improved? If so, when?

7. Finally, since the existing basic grant program formula for distributing Homeland Security funding, which you stated is inappropriate, only requires .75% of the funds be provided to each and every state, and .25% to each territory, that leaves 60% of the almost \$1.9 billion that needs to be distributed essentially open to your discretion. Will you exercise your discretion if the Congress does not change the formula criteria to distribute available funds in a more appropriate manner to the areas of the country that need the assistance the most?

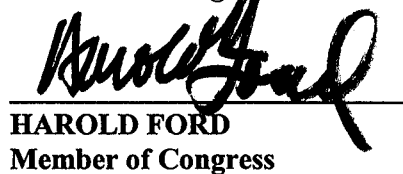
We look forward to hearing your response to these questions in addition we would ask that you meet with us to discuss these issues. It is clear that we have similar goals in this matter, and we would appreciate your time in sorting them out in person.

Please have your office contact Benjamin Chevat with Representative Maloney at 202/225-7944 to make arrangements for a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

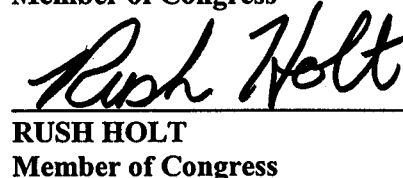

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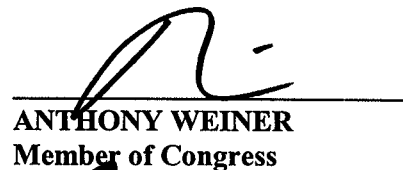

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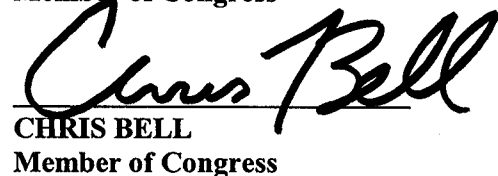

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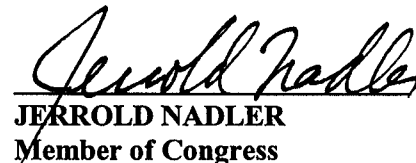

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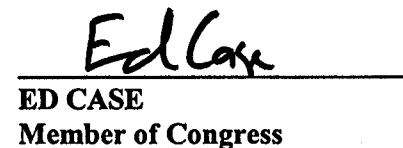

CHRIS BELL
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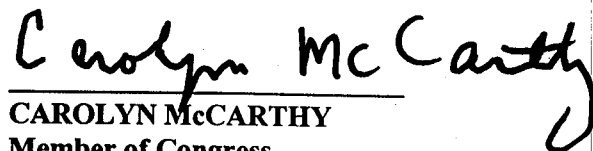

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